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SUBJECT: SOVIET POSITION ON VIETNAMESE-KHMER BORDER CONFLICT

SUMMARY: THE SOVIET MEDIA CONTINUES TO SUPPORT HANOI'S
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POSITION ON THE KHMER-VIETNAMESE BORDER CONFLICT. SOVIET
MFA OFFICIALS IN PRIVATE ALSO SUPPORT THE VIETNAMESE
POSITION WHILE STRONGLY CRITICIZING ALLEGED PRC TUTORIAL
RELATIONSHIP WITH POL POT REGIME, AND CHARGING THAT PRC
ATTEMPTING TO "ISOLATE" VIETNAM IN SEA. WE SENSE THAT
SOVIETS, PERHAPS LIKE THE VIETNAMESE, ARE DISAPPOINTED AT
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BORDER WAR AND THE PROSPECTS FOR

CONCLUDING IT. WHILE CONTINUING TO URGE NEGOTIATED SOLUTION, MOSCOW WILL USE THE CONFLICT TO INGRATIATE ITSELF FURTHER WITH THE VIETNAMESE AND, AS POSSIBLE, TO STOKE SINO-VIETNAMESE DIFFERENCES. END SUMMARY.

1. ROMANOV TO SRV: FEB. 15 PRAVDA CARRIES BRIEF ITEM ANNOUNCING DEPARTURE FOR HANOI OF HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION LED BY POLITBURO MEMBER G. V. ROMANOV. A SOVIET ASIAN SPECIALIST TOLD EMBOFF THAT VISIT HAS TWO PURPOSES: TO UNDERLINE SOVIET SUPPORT FOR VIETNAMESE POSITION DURING PERIOD OF TRIAL IN SEA, AND TO CONTRIBUTE TO PROCESS OF REGULAR HIGH-LEVEL CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS.

2. SOVIET PUBLIC POSTURE ON CONFLICT: DESPITE ABSENCE OF A FORMAL TASS ANNOUNCEMENT REGISTERING MOSCOW'S SUPPORT (WHICH HAS BEEN ISSUED ON CASE OF THE HORN CONFLICT), THE SOVIET MEDIA CONTINUES TO RALLY BEHIND VIETNAM THROUGH ALMOST DAILY PRAISE OF HANOI'S "INITIATIVES" AND CRITICISM OF KHMER "INTRASIGENCE". EXCEPT FOR OCCASIONAL SLAPS AT THE CHINESE, SOVIET REPORTING ON THE CONFLICT CLOSELY PARALLELS HANOI'S. THE SOVIET MEDIA GAVE PROMINENT COVERAGE TO THE NHAN DAN JAN. 20 EDITORIAL, THE SRV MFA JAN. 25 PRESS CONFERENCE IN HO CHI MINH CITY, GENERAL GIAP'S VISIT TO THE SEVENTH MILITARY ZONE, AND THE FEB. 5 SRV "PEACE INITIATIVE". THE SRV AMBASSADOR
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TO MOSCOW CALLED A SPECIAL PRESS CONFERENCE TO PROPAGATE THE ELEMENTS OF THE SRV FEB. 5 "INITIATIVE". WESTERN JOURNALISTS WERE NOT INVITED. THE AMBASSADOR'S REMARKS WERE REPORTED IN THE SOVIET PRESS AND ON SOVIET TV. SRV FOREIGN MINISTER TRINK'S LETTER TO UN SEC GEN WALDHEIM WAS ALSO WIDELY REPORTED IN THE SOVIET PRESS.

3. A LONG AND AUTHORITATIVE SOVIET COMMENTARY ON THE CONFLICT APPEARED IN PRAVDA FEB. 8. IT DETAILED AND EXPRESSED SOVIET SUPPORT FOR THE SRV FEB. 5 PROPOSAL, NOTING SOVIET POSITION THAT "ONLY A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT MEETS THE VITAL AND LASTING INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLES OF KAMPUCHEA AND VIETNAM". COMMENTARY ALSO:

-- DETAILED A TENDENTIOUSLY PRO-VIETNAMESE ACCOUNT OF THE HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT, CHARGING THE KHMER LEADERSHIP WITH INVADING VIETNAMESE TERRITORY AND RESPONDING TO VIETNAMESE PROPOSALS FOR A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION WITH "ARMED PROVOCATIONS" AND "PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS". COMMENTARY STATED THAT THE "STAND OF THE KAMPUCHEAN AUTHORITIES RUNS COUNTER TO THE INTERESTS OF THE KHMER PEOPLE, THE INTERESTS OF THE CAUSE OF PEACE AND SOCIAL

PROGRESS IN INDOCHINA AND THE ENTIRE SEA";

-- QUOTED PHAM VAN DONG'S CHARGE THAT "KHMER POLICY IS BEING APPROVED AND ENCOURAGED BY THE FORCES OF IMPERIALISM AND INTERNATIONAL REACTION WHICH ARE NURTURING FAR-REACHING PLANS IN REGARD TO SEA" (SOVIET AUDIENCE WILL READ USA FOR "IMPERIALISM" AND CHINA FOR "INTERNATIONAL REACTION");

-- CLEARLY IMPLIED CHINESE INVOLVEMENT ON KHMER SIDE BY STATING THAT "AS REPORTED IN THE FOREIGN PRESS, FOREIGN ADVISORS ARE TAKING AN ACTIVE PART IN THE MILITARY OPERATIONS OF KHMER ARMY DETACHMENTS". COMMENTARY ALSO QUOTES "THOSE WHO WANT TO AGGRAVATE THE INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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SITUATION" AS ANNOUNCING THAT "THEY WILL NOT WATCH INDIFFERENTLY THE DEVELOPMENT OF EVENTS ON THE BORDER OF

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VIETNAM AND KAMPUCHEA".

4. SOVIET PRIVATE COMMENTS: MFA SEA SPECIALISTS HAVE CLOSELY FOLLOWED PRO-VIETNAM LINE IN THEIR MEETINGS WITH U.S. AND OTHER EMBASSY OFFICERS. IN RECENT CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, MFA SEA COUNSELOR Y. K. SHAMANEVSKIY REGISTERED "COMPLETE" SOVIET SUPPORT FOR VIETNAM'S "JUST" STAND. HE CLAIMED THE SOVIET UNION "ACCEPTS" HANOI'S PRONOUNCEMENTS THAT VIETNAMESE TROOPS HAVE NOT ENTERED

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KHMER TERRITORY, BUT HAVE LIMITED THEIR ACTIONS TO DEFENDING VIETNAMESE TERRITORY AND PROTECTING THE VIETNAMESE POPULATION. (NOTE: THE ACTING CHIEF OF SEA DEPT. TOLD FRG DIPLOMAT THAT FIGHTING ESCALATED FROM MINOR BORDER INCIDENTS TO "MASSIVE INTRUSIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER". END NOTE.)

5. THE BORDER PROBLEM: SHAMANEVSKIY CLAIMED THAT THE BORDER PROBLEM HAS GROWN OUT OF FRENCH FAILURE TO DEFINE PROPERLY THE KHMER-VIETNAMESE BOUNDARY. HE SAID CONFUSION ON THE BORDER IS PARTICULARLY STRONG IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN OF CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, AND IN AREAS IN SOUTHEAST KAMPUCHEA CONSIDERED BY THE KHMER TO BE HISTORICALLY IMPORTANT. HE ADDED THAT THE PARROTS BEAK PRESENTS AN ESPECIALLY DIFFICULT PROBLEM IN THIS REGARD.

6. KHMER LEADERSHIP: SHAMANEVSKIY EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR VIETNAMESE DESCRIPTION OF KHMER LEADERS AS "REACTIONARY". HE ACCUSED THE POL POT REGIME OF "WAVING THE RED BANNER" WHILE FOMENTING ANTI-VIETNAMESE CHAUVINISM. HOWEVER, HE ACKNOWLEDGED SOVIET ACCEPTANCE OF THE KCP AS STILL GENUINELY "COMMUNIST". HE CLAIMED THAT KHMER PARTY FACTIONS WHICH DESIRE TO BUILD ON THE PAST THIRTY YEARS OF KHMER HISTORY RATHER THAN TO EXPLOIT ANCIENT PREJUDICES ARE SUPPRESSED NOW BUT COULD EVENTUALLY PREVAIL OVER THE POL POT GROUP.

7. FUTURE COURSE OF CONFLICT AND POSSIBLE SOVIET REACTION: SHAMANEVSKIY ALLEGED THAT VIETNAMESE GOOD WILL WAS underscored by HANOI PUBLIC AGREEMENT TO COMMENCE NEGOTIATIONS WHILE KHMER TROOPS REMAINED IN VIETNAM AT

TWO POINTS UP TO TWELVE MILES INSIDE VIETNAMESE TERRITORY.

IF THE KHMER GOVERNMENT PERSISTS, HE SAID, THE VIET-
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NAMESE ARE FULLY CAPABLE OF SETTLING THE CONFLICT MILITARILY. EMBOFF QUESTIONED WHETHER A MILITARY SOLUTION WOULD BE SO EASY, AND INQUIRED ABOUT SOVIET RESPONSE IF THE PAVN MARCHED TOWARD PHNOM PENH. SHAMANEVSKIY, EVEN WHEN REPEATEDLY PRESSED, REFUSED TO GIVE A DIRECT ANSWER TO THE QUESTION. HE DESCRIBED SUCH A SITUATION AS "SPECULATIVE", HOLDING THAT SOVIETS COULD ONLY DETERMINE

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THEIR POSITION AFTER AND NOT BEFORE SUCH A DEVELOPMENT. HE CONCLUDED BY EMPHASIZING HIS BELIEF THAT VIETNAMESE HAVE NO OBJECTIVE OTHER THAN DEFENDING THEIR TERRITORY, AND HAVE SUFFICIENT MEANS TO ACCOMPLISH THIS.

8. THE CHINA ANGLE: LIKE OTHER SOVIETS IN PRIVATE, SHAMANEVSKIY RESERVED HIS MOST CRITICAL REMARKS FOR THE CHINESE. HE ACCUSED PEKING OF FOLLOWING AN ANCIENT CHINESE PRACTICE OF "USING BARBARIANS TO FIGHT BARBARIANS" IN SEA, SO AS TO WEAKEN AND DIVIDE ITS NEIGHBORS. HE
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CHARGED THAT THE CHINESE ASSIST THE POL POT REGIME, AND THAT PEKING IS ENCOURAGING KHMER INTRANSIGENCE ON BORDER NEGOTIATIONS. CHINESE OBJECTIVES ARE TO FRUSTRATE VIETNAMESE MOVES TO ENCOURAGE STABILITY AND GOOD-NEIGHBORNESS IN THE REGION. THE CHINESE ARE URGING THE KHMERS TO BETTER RELATIONS WITH THAILAND, MALAYSIA AND OTHER SEA COUNTRIES IN ORDER TO ISOLATE THE VIETNAMESE. SHAMANEVSKIY RIDICULED WESTERN PRESS REPORTS ABOUT CHINESE "NEUTRALITY" IN THE CONFLICT, POINTING TO THE DISPROPORTIONATE ATTENTION GIVEN TO VIETNAMESE AND KHMER STATEMENTS IN THE CHINESE PRESS FOLLOWING MRS. TENG YING CHAO'S VISIT TO PHNOM PENH.

9. COMMENT: DESPITE THE CONTINUING CONFIDENCE EXPRESSED IN THE SOVIET MEDIA ABOUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ULTIMATE SUCCESS OF THE VIETNAMESE CAUSE, SOVIET OFFICIALS IN PRIVATE APPEAR TO BE INCREASINGLY DISAPPOINTED ABOUT THE TREND OF EVENTS IN THE VIETNAMESE-KHMER BORDER WAR. WE FEEL THAT HANOI'S LACK OF FLEXIBILITY IN DEALING WITH ITS INTRANSIGENT IF SMALLER NEIGHBOR, THE UNCOMFORTABLE, INDECISIVE MILITARY SITUATION ON THE VIETNAMESE-KHMER BORDER, AND THE NOTABLE LACK OF WORLD SUPPORT OUTSIDE OF THE PRO-SOVIET COMMUNIST COUNTRIES FEED THIS DISAPPOINTMENT. THE PRESSURES BEHIND MOSCOW'S PREFERENCE FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT PRESENTED REFTEL MUST HAVE BEEN REINFORCED OVER THE PAST MONTH BY A GROWING REALIZATION THAT HANOI'S OVERWHELMING MILITARY-DEMOGRAPHIC ADVANTAGE TOUTED BY SOVIETS EARLIER MAY NOT BE SO EASY. A KHMER GOVERNMENT IN PHNOM PENH ESTABLISHED BY VIETNAMESE BAYONETS WOULD HAVE LITTLE STAYING POWER IN THE ABSENCE OF A PERMANENT VIETNAMESE MILITARY PRESENCE. WITH CHINESE SUPPORT, THE PRESENT KHMER GOVERNMENT COULD WAGE A CLASSIC "PEOPLES" WAR EVEN IF PHNOM PENH WERE SEIZED. HANOI - AND MOSCOW - COULD INDEED FACE THE PROS-
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PECT OF FURTHER ISOLATION OF VIETNAM. MOSCOW'S OBJECTIVE OF "SOCIALIST UNITY" AMONG NEIGHBORING STATES WHICH HAS PROVED ILLUSIVE IN THE HORN, WOULD FALL FURTHER VICTIM TO THE SAME FORCES OF LOCAL DIFFERENCES AND HISTORICAL ANIMOSITIES AMONG THE "SOCIALIST" STATES OF INDOCHINA. FACED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASING SPECULATION ON CERTAIN SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE ETHIOPIAN-SOMALI AND SRV-KAMPUCHEAN CONFLICTS AND THE SOVIET POSITIONS THEREON, PLUS THE FACT THAT WIDE ATTENTION IS FOCUSED ON VALIDITY OF SOVIET ASSURANCES THAT ETHIOPIA WILL NOT CROSS THE SOMALIBORDER, THE SOVIETS ARE PROBABLY EXTRA SENSITIVE TO THE ISSUE OF SRV PUNITIVE ACTION ACROSS THE KAMPUCHEAN BORDER. THESE FACTORS, AND SHAMANEVSKIY'S ADAMENT REFUSAL TO COMMENT ON PROSPECTS FOR SOVIET SUPPORT IF THE VIETNAMESE ARMY SHOULD MARCH ON PHNOM PENH, STRENGTHEN OUR VIEW THAT MOSCOW WILL QUIETLY CONTINUE TO URGE HANOI NOT TO WIDEN THE FIGHTING SIGNIFICANTLY BUT TO WORK PATIENTLY FOR A NEGOTIATED COMPROMISE ON THE BORDER PROBLEM.

10. NOTWITHSTANDING SOVIET DISAPPOINTMENTS DESCRIBED PARAS 8 AND 9, AND SOVIET CONCERNS (DESCRIBED REFTEL) OVER A POSSIBLE VIGOROUS CHINESE RESPONSE TO A WIDENING OF THE KHMER-VIETNAMESE CONFLICT, WE FEEL THAT THE SOVIETS SEE THE CONFLICT AS ANOTHER AVENUE TO TIGHTEN SOVIET-VIETNAMESE BONDS AND TO EXACERBATE PRC-VIETNAMESE

DIFFERENCES. AS WITH ETHIOPIA, THE SOVIETS ARE ATTEMPTING TO PROVE THEIR VALUE TO HANOI IN ITS TIME OF NEED THROUGH MATERIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT. THIS IS underscored by the present high level ROMANOV VISIT TO VIETNAM.

11. TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, WE BELIEVE THAT MOSCOW WILL ALSO CAUTIOUSLY ATTEMPT TO CAPITALIZE ON THE VIETNAMESE-KHMER BORDER WAR TO WIDEN SINO-VIETNAMESE DIFFERENCES. IN DOING SO, THE SOVIETS WILL AVOID PROVOKING VIETNAMESE SUSPICIONS THAT THEY ARE EXPLOITING HANOI'S "KHMER

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PROBLEM" FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES RE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE. (THE GAP BETWEEN PRIVATE SOVIET COMMENTS STRONGLY DENOUNCING CHINA'S ALLEGED ROLE IN THE CONFLICT ON THE ONE HAND AND THE RELATIVELY MUTED ANTI-PRC CRITICISM IN THE SOVIET MEDIA ON THE OTHER IS EVIDENCE OF SOVIET AWARENESS FOR VIETNAMESE SENSITIVITIES IN THIS REGARD.) IN FACT, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THAT SOVIET POLICY MAKERS WILL BE CLOSELY WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BORDER WAR, GAUGING THEIR IMPACT ON SINO-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS, WITH A VIEW TOWARD SEIZING ANY OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY THE CONFLICT TO STOKE ANTI-CHINESE VIETNAMESE SENTIMENTS

AND TO INGRATIATE THEMSELVES FURTHER WITH THE VIETNAMESE. MATLOCK

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